

Guidelines for Using and Writing Self-paced Lessons

I. Using self-paced lesson.

Self-paced (SP) lessons for participants are intended to give nutrition education (NE) options to participants and WIC staff. Each local agency can choose whether to use SP lessons in their agency. The State Agency and the TALWD Nutrition Education Committee developed the following guidelines for using SP lessons. If you have any questions, contact your nutrition education consultant at (512) 458-7440.

A. Appropriate Uses for SP lessons - Self-paced lessons are to be used as an alternate form of nutrition education when group education or individual counseling can not be provided. Self-paced lessons can be used in situations such as the examples listed below:

- C In cases when a participant is late or misses a class. The participant may choose to complete a self-paced lesson rather than be rescheduled for class at another time.
- C For those times when a participant's schedule conflicts with the class schedule.
- C Situations in which a participant is sick and chooses not to attend group class.
- C Instances where a participant is due for voucher issuance but an appropriate class is not available.

B. Inappropriate Uses of SP Lessons - Self-paced lessons should **not** be used in situations such as those described below:

- C As the NE lesson for a group of participants (i.e., SP lessons should not be used as the group class).
- C In place of individual counseling at certification.
- C As a punitive measure when a participant cannot stay for class.

C. Procedures for Using Self-paced Lessons

- C The WIC Director or NE Coordinator should decide the specific LA procedures/criteria for using the SP lessons within their agency. This includes who decides when to offer SP lessons to participants, where

participants should complete the lessons, how vouchers will be issued following completion of a lesson, etc.

- C To become familiar with the lessons, have each staff member complete each SP lesson you plan to use.
- C Before giving a SP lesson to a participant, make sure that the topic is appropriate for the participant's category.
- C When using self-paced lessons as a nutrition education contact, **policies NE 2.0 and 2.1 must be met.** After a participant completes a lesson, a designated staff member should review the evaluation or activity component of the lesson with the participant. Each lesson will have a code in the Texas WIN computer system.

D. Additional Considerations for Using Self-paced Lessons

- C A participant has the right to refuse all nutrition education, including self-paced lessons. Participants should not be denied vouchers if they can not or will not stay in the clinic long enough to complete the self-paced lesson. If the participant does not receive NE, then an NE code **should not** be entered at voucher issuance.
- C Give each participant the same self-paced lesson only once (when more lessons are developed, a 12 month schedule could be developed using a different self-paced lesson each month).
- C If you plan to develop your own SP lessons or use those developed by another local agency, it is important to ensure the lessons follow the guidelines provided by the State Agency.
- C Be sensitive to the fact that non-literate participants may require help from staff to complete a self-paced lesson.
- C Note: Send all Local Agency developed self-paced lessons to your nutrition education contact person for coding and approval.

II. Writing self-paced lessons.

Self-paced lessons are designed as self-guided **interactive** learning tools, which means they are different from group or individual lessons. Self-guided learning is a distinctive form of education. Lessons designed for self-paced learning should follow certain guidelines with regard to presentation, learner involvement, artwork, etc. When writing self-paced lessons, it is important that they are written to get the participant involved in the subject. The following guidelines were developed to help local agencies write their own self-paced lessons.

A. Layout/Design/Artwork

1. Typeface

Select a typeface that is easy to read. *Serif* typefaces, those with serifs or short strokes at the ends of the lines that make up letters, are easier to read than *sans serif* typefaces, those without serifs. You can, however use sans serif for headings or other parts of your lesson that don't require continual reading.

a. Serif Typefaces

This is an example of Baskerville

This is an example of Bookman Light

This is an example of Courier

This is an example of New Serif.

b. Sans Serif Typefaces

This is an example of Avant Garde

This is an example of Optimum

This is an example of Arial

This is an example of RS Sans Serif

c. Typeface Rules

- C Avoid italics, curls or scripts.
- C DON'T USE ALL CAPS! IT'S HARDER TO READ AND FEELS LIKE THE WRITER IS YELLING.
- C The more contrast between paper and ink, the easier it will be to read.
- C Use at least a 12-point font size (this is 12-point- this is 14-point- this is 16-point)

2. Visual Design

A good way to reinforce the message is to have the reader *see* the message. The reader is more likely to remember the message if the visual impression is vivid and real. Visuals are most effective when they help the reader understand the concepts. Visuals are, also, a good way to show step-by-step procedures or explanations. Pictures can serve to direct the eye to the message and reinforce the message for the reader.

- C Use arrows, color, and other highlighting techniques to lead the readers eye sequentially from one piece of information to another.

- C Spacing is important. Maintain consistency in spacing throughout your work. Use lots of white space to reduce distractions, and to make it easier to read and digest.
- C Graphs are difficult for many low-literacy readers. Avoid them if possible.
- C Use **bold** only for short sequences of information.

B. Language

Use understandable words. It is estimated that between 50 and 60% of adults in the U.S. are limited in reading skills. Most WIC materials are written at about the 6th grade reading level. Newspapers are generally written at the 7th grade level.

- C Make the title or heading reflect what the content is really about. Catchy titles are often lost on the poor reader, and may not translate into other languages.
- C Address the learner as “you.” Use the active voice to produce a conversational tone.
- C Use examples.
- C Refer to Doak, Chapter 4 (see reference list) for more information on reading level.

C. Concepts

Make the message simple, direct and useful. Try to stick to one or two basic concepts that you want the learner to come away with. Keep it simple, yet remember, the intent is to learn something new. Concentrate on the basic message

- C Present no more than one major idea per page.
- C Lists, arranged vertically are easier to digest than long paragraphs containing lists.

D. Interactive Component

Give the learner the opportunity to interact with the information that is being presented. Interaction increases the learner’s comprehension and recall and gives emphasis to key points in the lesson. The interactive component should reinforce the message of the lesson to the participant. The more the participant becomes involved in doing the lesson, the more he/she will get out of it.

- C Use simple games such as crossword puzzles to allow learners to interact with the information presented in the lesson.
- C Give emphasis to key information and allow the learner to use the information by having the learner:
 - < Put a “x” through pictures of high fat foods.
 - < Underline key points.
 - < Check off foods they will buy.
 - < Mark on a calendar when they will exercise.